

THE



POWER OF INDIVIDUALS TO PREVENT MELANCHOLY IN THEMSELVES.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE

Literary and Scientific Institution, Pimlico,

MAY 14th, 1860,

BY

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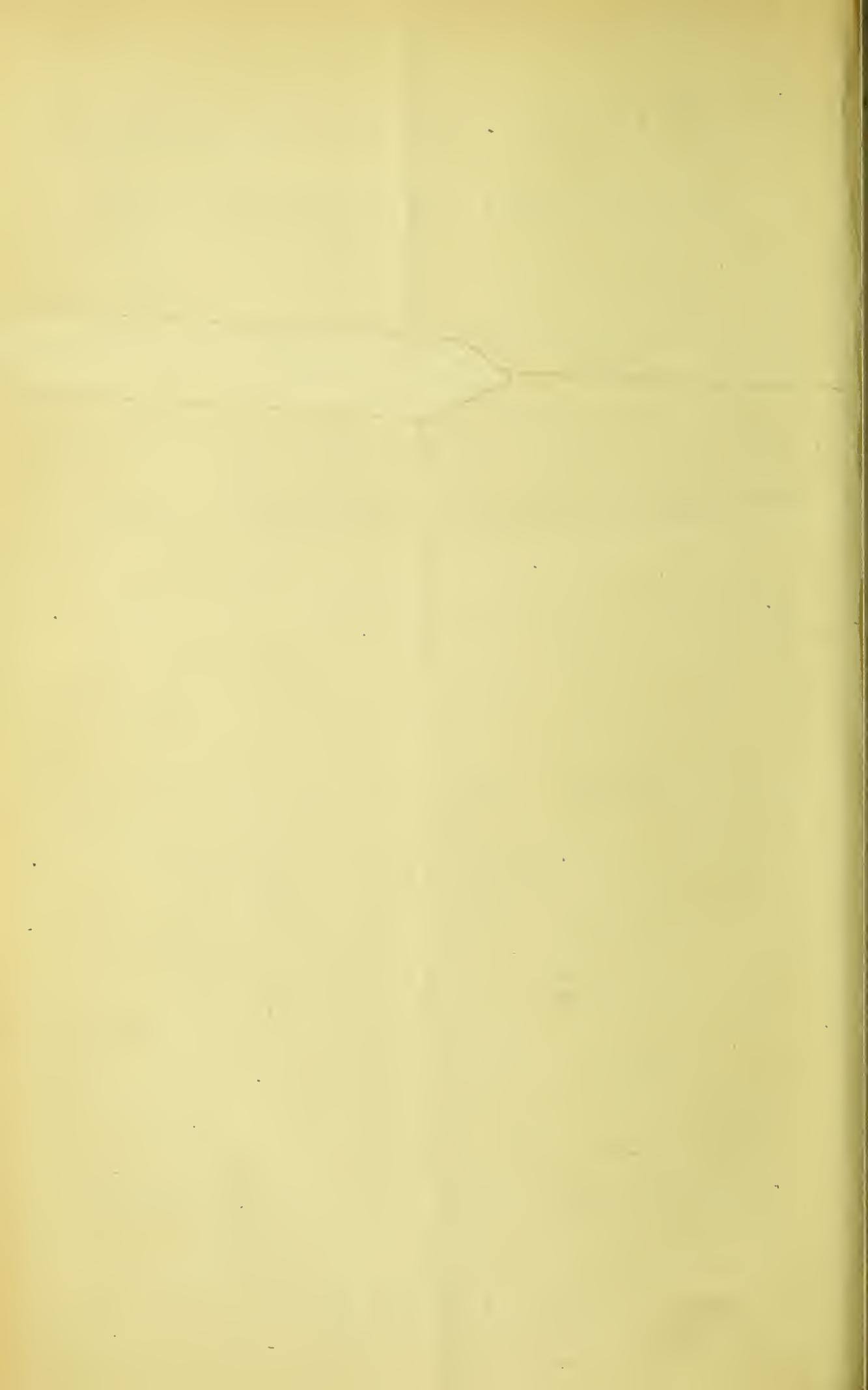
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THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALS TO PREVENT MELANCHOLY IN THEMSELVES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

HAVING already had the honor of delivering a Lecture at this Institution on the sanitary condition of large towns by the wish of the committee, with a view to point out many of the sanitary evils which once surrounded us, and which are being annihilated, in order to prevent the bodily dangers that might arise from them, I thought it would be interesting, upon a second application from your secretary for another lecture, to introduce to your notice some subject connected with the mind. Since thence, an effort has been made to ward off bodily sufferings by the recommendation of sanitary improvements; why should not a plan be proposed so to regulate the motions of the mind, that gloomy thoughts may be prevented? Such considerations induced me to offer the following subject to your notice this evening:—"On the Power of Individuals to Prevent Melancholy in Themselves."

Even in disease of the mind, as it is termed, the physical condition of the body should not be overlooked, for there is a strong relation between the latter and happiness. It has been observed that the deaths among the most indigent class of this parish* double those of the wealthy, and that the same law prevails in all large cities or towns. How great, then, must be the measure of happiness in one portion of the population compared with that of the other. Then, I say, that sanitary improvement must lead the way to mental advancement. Establish more model lodging houses, make the poor man's home more comfortable, and thus enable him to diminish the

* St. George's, Hanover Square.

tavern bill, so that the *fever* bill for attendance upon his family, and a large amount of melancholy, may be prevented.

I was requested to visit on Saturday, 25th of February last, a case of supposed small-pox in Robert Street, Commercial Road South, which, as many of you know, is situated in the Belgrave sub-district. The house consisted of four small rooms, each of which contained a family; my patient, whose complaint proved to be chicken-pox, was living in the back parlour. I went to the house again on the following Monday evening, and found a case of small-pox in an infant in the front parlour. There were seven other children in the same apartment, besides the father and mother. One of the children was a nurse child, which received nourishment from the female, who suckled her own babe afflicted with the small-pox. The nurse child had been placed under this person's care, apparently more for her own benefit, as she received four shillings a week for its maintenance, than for the advantage of the helpless infant, which was sent to a place already overcrowded, and reeking with small-pox. Loud groans having been heard to proceed from the upper back room, I was told that they came from a young man who had been ailing since the previous Thursday, and that he had not received any medical attendance. On entering the room, I found him suffering from small-pox, with large blisters on the backs of the fingers, produced by his falling into the fire. The room was occupied by the mother and a brother; it is true, they had a bedstead, but only one blanket to cover themselves. How can such a state of things be calculated to render home comfortable, or improve the mental condition of the labouring classes. A note was forwarded to the master of St. George's Workhouse to send a fly for the patient to be taken into the

wards at Mount Street, where he was received the same night.

I cannot help remarking that the Poor Board of St. George's, Hanover Square, made an excellent arrangement by opening two large airy wards for the special accommodation of patients afflicted with small-pox during the recent outbreak of that disease—an arrangement that might have been imitated with advantage in the neighbouring parishes.

We may presume that none of the audience present would exclaim with the poet—

“There is such charm in melancholy,
I would not, if I could, be gay.”

But we read in *Fraser's Magazine* for March last, that some people like to be persistently miserable. “Don't you know that multitudes persistently look away from the numerous pleasant things they might contemplate, and look fixedly and almost constantly at painful and disagreeable things. You sit down, my friend, in your snug library, beside the evening fire. The blast without is hardly heard through the drawn curtains. Your wife is there, and your two grown-up daughters. You feel thankful that, after the bustle of the day, you have this quiet retreat, where you may rest, and refit yourself for another day with its bustle. But the conversation goes on. Nothing is talked of but the failings of the servants, and the idleness and impudence of your boys, unless, indeed, it be the supercilious bow with which Mrs. Snooks that afternoon passed your wife, and the fact that the pleasant dinner party at which you assisted the evening before at Mr. Smith's, has been ascertained to have been one of a second chop character, his more honored guests having dined on the previous day. Every petty disagreeable in your lot, in short, is brought out, turned

ingeniously in every possible light, and aggravated and exaggerated to the highest degree. The natural and necessary results follow. An hour or less of this discipline brings all parties to a sulky and snappish frame of mind. And, instead of the cheerful and thankful mood in which you were disposed to be when you sat down, you find that your whole moral nature is jarred, and out of gear. And your wife, your daughters, and yourself pass into moody, sullen silence over your books—books which you are not likely for this evening to much appreciate or enjoy.

“Now, I put it to every sensible reader, whether there be not a great deal too much of this kind of thing. Are there not families that never spend a quiet evening together without embittering it by taking up every unpleasant subject in their lot and history? There are folk, who, both in their own case, and that of others, seem to find a strange satisfaction in sticking the thorn in the hand further in—even in twisting the dagger in the heart.”

Besides the little miseries so graphically described in *Fraser*, there are far more serious ones to be contemplated in family life. How many instances could be quoted of dissolute parents setting a bad example to children, the tyranny of some part of a family over the other, and the social cunning wherewith one person tries, by undue means, to overreach another, and mere money-making matches without regard to mutual affection. Happily, most people possess a natural elasticity of mind, which prevents their falling into incurable despondency. But many persons’ experience must convince them that periods have occurred in their lives, when some inward struggle has been required to sustain their energy, in order to obviate the effects of mental disquietude arising from

some disappointment, or the malignant designs of others. Even many of those who appear to be the happiest, or able to contribute most effectually to the amusement of their friends, become, when alone, a torment to themselves.

Hence, we find that some of our best comedians have been the victims of melancholy, which, according to Shakspeare, is the "nurse of phrenzy." It is related of Liston, the celebrated comic actor, that having once consulted a physician respecting his despondency, he was advised to go and see Liston, who replied, "I am that unhappy man."

"But where's the oak that never feels a blast?
Or sun at times that is not overcast?"

There is a very great amount of mental derangement among the French, although they are esteemed a lively people, whose mottoes are "*toujours gaie*," and "*vive la bagatelle*." It is not, however, intended arrogantly to assert that a power of repressing gloomy thoughts is inherent in man's nature without reference to a Higher Power, as we are not able in our own strength to do anything without such help, from which our sufficiency is derived; neither is it to be thought a specific in all cases of incipient melancholy; but if a power can be exercised by man in taming wild animals, and making them useful for the conveniences of life, why should he not be able, in numerous instances, to control in himself those violent emotions of the soul, which so frequently lead to melancholy or mental derangement? Nor is it attempted to deny that grace is needful to succeed in such a mental conflict, for persons might be able to tame wild beasts, and yet unable to subdue even their own anger. But since Omnipotence has promised relief to the oppressed, and to give to them that ask, it is not unreasonable to suppose

that even the intelligence of some insane persons might be so roused, as to find for themselves an antidote against their own violent feelings, or even their delusions. This principle of self-control, in such cases, has already been acted upon for a great many years, under the advice of medical men, at the different lunatic asylums, where a kind and rational treatment has been substituted for the whips and chains of former times. The same idea was promulgated in a communication made to the members of the Royal Institution, at one of the Friday evening meetings in March 1841, by the Rev. John Barlow, and was suggested by certain passages in the writings of Drs. Thomas Mayo, Conolly, and M. Pinel.

Physiologists have traced nerves in all beings that can feel or move, except in the class containing coral insects, sea-anemones, hydatids, flukes, &c. But it is believed that even these possess a nervous system, since they exhibit sensation and voluntary powers.

Here are representations of the sea-anemone in the natural and magnified state. The tentacles grasp at whatever comes within their reach; if a live minnow, for instance, be dropped into an aquarium, and touch them, it is immediately seized, the back bent, and the whole drawn into the stomach, although the fish may be nearly half as long again as the upper surface of the zoophyte—a term derived from two Greek words, signifying a plant and an animal. The minnow is retained for about a week, and when the soft parts are absorbed, the head and bones are rejected. This extreme sensitiveness is rendered more wonderful when we consider that the most minute anatomist has been unable to detect the slightest trace of nervous fibre in the creature.

It will be impossible within the brief space of an hour to enter, at any length, upon the physiology connected

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with the subject under our consideration ; yet, a short explanation of the nervous system delineated on the diagrams placed before you might be found useful.

[Diagrams representing the brains of different animals were described, to show that the hemispheres increase in proportion to the intelligence of each, until they become perfect in man. Sketches, also, of the great sympathetic nerve with its ganglia, and of the spinal system, were explained.]

This slight allusion to the nervous system is sufficient to show that the brain of an animal merely receives sensation, that the brain also of man might be lowered to a similar condition, unless the power of intelligence or of the will be called into exercise to control it ; and we read, “it might, by disease, become so impaired in its capability, as finally to be in the state of a limb never developed by exercise, which the will strives in vain to direct.”

Do we not see persons who have reached mature age without making scarcely any effort to control themselves ? What is the consequence ? They become almost entirely *animalized*. Hence, violence of temper gets more and more beyond the power of restraint. The circulation is hurried, and the brain becomes excited ; but the power of the intellect, foreseeing the consequences, has overcome these violent emotions by taciturnity ; if not, some outrage may be committed, for which society holds the guilty person responsible, because he allowed himself to be misled.

Others, again, are continually brooding over some melancholy event, until life becomes a burden, and are allowing themselves to be their own tormentors, for they cannot sufficiently rouse their intellectual force from neglect of mental exercise, so as to enable themselves to divert their attention with other objects.

It has been observed that insanity, from *inefficiency* of the *intellectual force*, occurs principally among the poor, while the upper classes suffer more in this respect from its *misdirection*.

It is a very great satisfaction to find that barbarous means have been discontinued in the treatment of insanity on account of the increase of skill in medical science. For this advance in humanity we are much indebted to the younger Pinel in France, who was thought at first to be as mad as his patients when they were allowed more liberty, and Dr. Conolly, who introduced the alteration into this country, in defiance of serious opposition. Allusion to the abuses which formerly existed in Lunatic Asylums may be useful in showing how the substitution of amusement and employment of the human mind* for the relief of mental derangement, instead of mechanical restraint, was made available for the cure of that complaint; and, consequently, in explaining how men disposed to melancholy might adopt with advantage a similar mode of action as a preventive in their own cases against that severe malady.

If we find that the poor Lunatic maintained at the public expense in an asylum can be benefited by moral treatment—such as religion, gardening, instruction, music, or following some occupation—why should not the nervous rich man endeavour so to energise himself as to prevent his falling into a state of mental paralysis? Why should not a course of instruction, in certain cases, be voluntarily adopted by individuals predisposed to this complaint? I feel certain that not only many young, but also elderly, persons in easy circumstances, who pass their time in doing nothing, might ward off much melancholy on the one hand, and

* The author published a letter on this subject in vol. xvi. of the *Medical Gazette*, in 1835, and caused a distinct course of Lectures on Insanity to be delivered at the Hunterian School of Medicine.

peevishness, or childishness, on the other, by calling their mental powers into proper exercise.

Only observe what good nursing will do in prolonging the lives of old people, or how much temperance in youth adds to the physical power of the body in advanced life : reflect upon the contrary effects of intemperate habits—how much activity is displayed in one case, and how prostration and decrepitude exist in others of the same standing—so the mind requires constant attention and exercise.

“ Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest.”

But to return to the abuses which formerly existed in the treatment of the insane. We read in the evidence before the House of Commons, published in 1859, that when the Commissioners began their visitations, one of the first rooms that they went into contained nearly 150 patients in every form of madness ; a large proportion of them were chained to the wall—some melancholy, some furious ; but the noise and din and roar were such that they positively could not hear each other. Every form of disease and every form of madness was there. In the court appropriated to the women, there were fifteen or twenty females, whose sole dress was a piece of red cloth tied round the waist ; many of them with long beards covered with filth. They were crawling on their knees ; and that was the only place where they could be.

Here is, by way of sample, a report relating to the York Hospital in 1815. It was found, in May 1815, that there were concealed rooms in the hospital, unknown even to the Governors of the Asylum, and that patients slept in these rooms, which were saturated with filth, and totally unfit for the habitation of any human being. Thirteen female patients were crowded in a room 12 feet by 7 feet 10 inches ; the keepers had access to the female wards. One

patient (a clergyman) was kicked down stairs by a keeper, whilst his wife was insulted by the keepers with indecent language, in order to prevent her from visiting him. Another male patient disappeared, and was never afterwards heard of. Four patients were supposed to be burnt to death.

The asylum having been found to be on fire, a few days after, a general investigation was directed ; and there were several other patients of whom no account could be given.

Many more examples of extreme barbarity could be cited, but I will be content with calling your attention to one more instance, which was stated in evidence before a Parliamentary Committee, in 1827, and related to the Bethnal Green Asylum. The patients were chained down in their cribs, wet and dirty, at four o'clock on Saturday, and were never liberated till nine or ten o'clock on Monday morning, wallowing in their filth and in the utmost misery, in crowded ill-ventilated places. The object of this cruelty was to give some of the keepers (of whom there was an insufficient number) a holiday on Sundays. The patients lay in these cribs naked, upon straw, with nothing but a blanket to cover them, although the window was merely an aperture without glass ; that these were dirty patients, insensible to the call of nature, yet that none of them were washed, and a few only of them were wiped during this period ; and that on the Monday morning, even in November (and as one witness stated, in frosty weather), they were rubbed down with a mop, dipped in cold water, like so many animals. It was further stated, that there was no medical treatment for insanity, that there was no employment or classification.

The medical treatment was formerly very barbarous. At Bedlam, the patients used to be bled in the Spring and Autumn—perhaps 150 at a time—early in the morning, before the medical attendants had arrived. Cold affusion

had also been employed in some institutions, by means of buckets of water, which were directed to the head. In Germany, patients were sometimes confined in a dark room, with only half a floor, while the remaining portion consisted of a bath, into which they fell unexpectedly; hence it was termed the bath of surprise. Other unfortunate individuals have been thrown into a pond, and dragged out in a fainting condition. Sir Alexander Morison showed me some years ago, in one of our Lunatic Asylums, a shower bath with short tubes, much wider than the ordinary apertures, and each forming a distinct douche, so as to allow the water to fall heavily upon the head. I am happy to say it had been disused for some time, as the severe shocks on the head, during its employment, were calculated to injure the brain, by inducing paralysis.

Let us then contrast the past with the present mode of treating this unfortunate class of persons. The law at present enjoins the Commissioners to inquire what is the amount and character of the occupation; and that no asylum can now be built unless there be a sufficient provision of land to give the patients out-of-door exercise, that they may cultivate the soil; and also in-door occupations are now given to women—a large number of them are engaged in the kitchen and in the laundry, and very efficient they are. The Earl of Shaftesbury goes on to say that it tends greatly to the progress of their case. And again, his Lordship says, there is another provision which he thinks would be desirable—that the Committee should investigate a little more, and see that provision is made for the consolation of religion. It was never thought of at one time, but it is now thought of, and in some places is really carried into effect with the most beneficial results. In the licensed asylums there is little or no such practice. In Hanwell they have as many as seventy or eighty, or more, commu-

nicians, and the chaplain reports the happy effects of it upon their moral and intellectual condition. But even at the present time the condition of the insane might be much ameliorated; for it appears that there are not less than 7000 lunatics in workhouses, and that they have separate wards in only some of these establishments. Mr. Gaskell believes that lunatic wards in workhouses are, even in their best form, objectionable; and Mr. Farnell observes, that the accommodation in the metropolitan workhouses is generally very bad. There is also evidence of the neglect of special medical treatment in them; of cruelty having been often practised in cases of idiocy; of great abuse in regard to mechanical restraint; and of their peculiar unfitness for melancholic or recent and curable cases. Indeed, it is but reasonable to suppose, that, generally speaking, the discipline of a workhouse is very unsuitable for such patients, where health would be greatly improved by a removal to an asylum in the country.

In reference also to Chancery Lunatics, an improvement might be made if they were more frequently visited. The Act prescribes that the visit shall be made only once a year, but the Lord Chancellor can direct more frequent visits, under special circumstances; there is, however, only one visit during the year. Now, if it be the duty of the visitors to inquire into the mental and bodily health as well as the treatment of the patient, and to see that the allowance for maintenance is properly applied, ought not the visiting to be made more effective than it is at present? Drs. Southey, Sutherland, and Messrs. Wilde, Bolden, and Francis Barlow, think that more visitation is requisite.

The period of incubation, during which the symptoms of melancholy or insanity often exist for a long time, should be carefully watched. It must, however, be remembered that persons may be fond of solitude, restless, mis-

chievous, self-complacent, ungovernably passionate, and yet not melancholy in the proper sense of the word, for such symptoms may be the habitual peculiarities of their minds. But if fondness for retirement lead to muteness or gloominess, if restlessness cause them to change their residence continually, if mischievous propensities should induce such moroseness as to suggest ideas of injury to themselves or others, and if such signs should occur so suddenly, that they are able to detect a perceptible change in their usual conduct, let them at once endeavour to make a strong effort of the will, in order to nip the premonitory symptoms in the bud, lest they should be absorbed with a single idea, or a few trains of thought, and the mind become so foward and domineering, as to be beyond their own control.

With regard to the early symptoms of insanity, it has been well said by Dr. Winslow, that if a man naturally and constitutionally disposed to be provident should suddenly fall into habits of extravagance,—if a person, remarkable for mildness and equanimity of temper, should, without great provocation, become subject to fits of violent passion,—if the naturally virtuous man takes a pleasure in vicious gratifications,—the kind attentive father and husband, without any adequate cause, neglects his family,—then he maintains that these deviations, if accompanied by impairment of the bodily health, are valuable beacons to guide us in the formation of a sound opinion respecting the mental state of the individual.

These incipient symptoms, the result of cerebral irritation, are often mastered by a strong effort of the will on the part of the patient; but if allowed to proceed unchecked, and no watch kept upon the morbid feelings, the disease will break out into obvious insanity. It becomes then absolutely requisite to call the will into activity, for

it has been rightly said, "that irresolution is a wretched convulsion of the mind, which only too readily terminates in intellectual paralysis. Strong volition is the deepest and most special of all mental impulses. Persons generally believe they possess the power to choose between good and evil, unless they are fatalists, who think they possess no moral choice whatever—a circumstance plainly contradicted by the instinct of conscience."

Before adverting to the mode by which an individual may be able to restrain melancholy or insanity, we must allude to some of the causes which produce these complaints. Pinel has said, that an "undue severity—that reproaches for the slightest faults—that harshness exercised with passion—that threats and blows—exasperate children, irritate youth, destroy the influence of parents, produce perverse inclinations, and even insanity, especially if this severity be the result of the caprices and immorality of fathers. The corruption," he continues, "is most general, greatest, and most hideous among the lower class; that it gives birth to almost all the evils of society; that it produces much insanity; and at the same time, much more of crime than among the higher classes. The vices of education in the higher classes, and the want of it in the lower, explain these differences. Education supplies the place of morals among the former, while no motive suspends the arm of the mob. Of all moral causes, those which most frequently produce insanity, are pride, fear, fright, ambition, reverses of fortune, and domestic trouble." Sometimes a propensity to suicide happens from mere imitation, arising from a morbid sympathy.

Our magistrates found it necessary to inflict punishment in several cases of persons caught in the act of taking away their own lives, in the autumn of 1834. The treadmill was effectual in curing some of them, but no doubt

a much milder remedy might prevent a wretched individual from committing self-murder. A plunge into cold water has so far abated the impetuosity of others, that they have been glad to escape if the means of safety were within reach. Admitting a suicidal mania to be the cause in certain cases, admitting that some persons are unable to overcome their delusions, still we cannot allow the act of suicide to be a proof of insanity in every instance. Indeed, it is considered that many cases have occurred from blind imitation, and if a check were not employed, the propensity might become epidemical, and, therefore, punishment to prevent them becomes a humane act. It cannot be doubted that some slight obstacle might interrupt the current of the patient's thoughts, and that he has the power in himself to ward off the catastrophe. The dumps, vapours, and blue devils are generally associated, in an Englishman's mind, with the month of November. Let then any of us, if disposed to melancholy, beware of brooding thoughts during that month, and by diverting our attention, "rather bear those ills we have than fly to others we know not of."

It was stated several years ago in one of the medical journals, that some of the soldiers belonging to a foreign regiment hung themselves from lamp-posts, one after another, and that this suicidal tendency was not stopped until one of the men was made an example of, by being well flogged. Buonaparte, hearing of some instances of suicide among his troops, issued a proclamation:—

"Order of the day, St. Cloud, 22 Floreal, an X.—The Grenadier Groblin has committed suicide from a disappointment in love. He was in other respects a worthy man. This is the second event of the kind that has happened in this corps within a month. The first consul directs that it shall be notified in the order of the day of the guard, that a soldier ought to know how to overcome

the grief and melancholy of his passions; that there is as much true courage in bearing mental affliction manfully, as in remaining unmoved under the fire of a battery. To abandon oneself to grief without resisting, and to kill oneself in order to escape from it, is like abandoning the field of battle before being conquered.

"(Signed) { NAPOLEON,
BESSIERES."

In hospitals, St. Vitus' dance is occasionally produced by one hysterical patient imitating the movements of another under that malady. You are all aware, that only a few years ago it became necessary to cover over the gallery of the monument with iron bars, in consequence of suicides following each other in quick succession, so that the act and the mode of performing it became sources of imitation.

It is mentioned in a report made in Pennsylvania, in 1812, that out of fifty insane persons, thirty-four had become so as a result of mental affliction, and sixteen from physical causes. But there is one very frequent cause of the complaint, namely, intemperance, which requires special consideration.

The Earl of Shaftesbury has stated in his evidence before the House of Commons, in 1859, that "seven-tenths of the lunatics are lunatics from the use of strong drink. We shall see how large a proportion of the cases of lunacy is ascribable to intoxication; but we shall draw, moreover, this startling conclusion: that if thousands are deprived from this cause of their reason, and incarcerated in mad-houses, there must be manifold more who, though they fall short of the point of absolute insanity, are impaired in their understanding and moral perceptions."

Dr. Corsellis, of the Wakefield Lunatic Asylum, has said, "I am led to believe that intemperance is the ex-

citing cause of insanity in about one-third of the cases of this institution ; " and, he adds, " the proportion at Glasgow is about twenty-six per cent., and at Aberdeen, eighteen per cent." It is also asserted by Dr. Reusselaer, of the United States, that, " in his opinion, one-half of the cases of insanity which came under the care of medical men in that country, arose, more or less, from the use of strong drink." It is sad to reflect, that so many persons deprive themselves of reason by habitual intoxication ; and that such persons are not in time taken care of before they commit some outrage upon society, for which they lose their liberty, although unconscious at the time of the heinousness of their offence. Work seldom destroys a man ; now worry frequently does. It is related of a celebrated statesman, that public affairs were never too much for him, but debts worried him, and port wine killed him.

The habit also of excessive smoking, which at the present time mere boys indulge in, is one likely to be very injurious to the nervous system, and to produce delirium tremens. The change of habit which has taken place among Englishmen with regard to smoking, is very remarkable. Writers used to caution travellers about to proceed to Holland, against entering the cabin of a Dutch treckschuyt, on account of the smoking, which made them sick and sulky. The custom has now become so universal in England, that many noblemen's and gentlemen's parlours are converted into Dutch treckschuys, as far as the smoking is concerned. Formerly smoking and the smell of tobacco smoke were associated with the idea of a pot-house, now certain young ladies will soil the drawing room paper with the ashes of their cigarettes. It is more singular, because in the present day fresh air is constantly called for on sanitary grounds, yet the fathers of many families will commence smoking the first thing in the

morning, or immediately after breakfast. Among the poor the evil is very great where a family live in one room, and sickness exists, the patients being obliged to inhale mephitic air. At one of our London hospitals a smoking room has lately been appropriated to the students, but I hope the day is far distant, when the medical staff, in imitation of some continental professors, purpose introducing this custom into the wards. I have known young men smoke fifteen cigars after a breakfast party at a university. If the window is open, our neighbour's butler fills the room with smoke ; if we travel by railroad at night when the windows are closed, by steamboat or stage coach, some of the passengers commence smoking, and we may go 500 miles without obtaining a breath of fresh air ; so strong is the habit and so selfish is human nature.

It is an ascertained fact, that a great number of cases of melancholy and insanity may be referred to ungoverned passions ; and that females, who are educated merely in showy accomplishments, or lead an inactive life—victims probably of the *eternal needle*, while the mind is neglected, or such as possess very susceptible minds—are more liable to these complaints than men, who are generally less ardent, but more soundly educated, and follow more active occupations. Not that women have more malice than the other sex, but from the nature of their constitutions they are less able to sustain the impetuosity of anger. How impotent this passion has rendered mankind ! Some through it are so weak as to be unable to hear truth. It has made kings slaves, and caused desolation in the world. We read in history that Cambyses, to satisfy his rage, ordered the noses of all the inhabitants of Syria to be cut off ! Caligula is reported to have been so offended with the heavens when the thunder hindered his sporting, that he challenged his gods to fight with him ;

and that, using the words of a poet, he said to them, "Either take me out of the world, or I will take you out of it."

But I have not time to multiply such hateful excesses of this passion, which is much more pernicious than the pleasurable emotions. It sometimes acts violently on the whole frame, and disorders the secretion of the liver.

It is related of Charles VI. of France, that in 1392, being violently incensed against the Duke of Bretagne, and agitated with a spirit of malice and revenge, he could neither eat, drink, nor sleep for many days together; and at length became furiously mad as he was riding on horseback, drawing his sword, and striking promiscuously every one who approached him. The disease fixed upon his intellect, and accompanied him to his death.* Some people are excited by anger to such a degree, on account of a trifle, that it might be imagined they had lost a kingdom. Blinded by their interests, and urged on by self-love, they so revenge themselves as to commit an injustice.

Seneca says it is not piety but weakness that excites such anger, which he compares with the conduct of boys, who weep as much for their lost nuts as they would for the death of their parents.

M. Esquirol relates the case of a young lady, who became furiously maniacal because she presented her husband with a girl instead of a boy. She was cured; but it is clear that a reasonable acquiescence in an event quite beyond her own power, would have entirely prevented the attack. How is it to be expected that any person living in the world can be exempted from its accidents? A queen would have been subject to the same law as this young lady. Diseases, the malice and deceit of enemies or

* Mason Good, vol. iv., p, 128.

friends, may be foreseen, but they cannot always be avoided; and it is rather too much for us to expect dispensations, which others cannot possibly obtain. Now those who are tormented with this passion, should endeavour to stifle the commencement, in consequence of the violence of its nature. Self-restraint in the government of our passions is no doubt a most difficult lesson to learn, but the greater the difficulty the greater the glory. The abuse of anger engages us in acts of revenge, and when once commenced it cannot be regulated. We should then despise slight injuries, and endeavour to soften severe ones —remembering that if the designs of men be evil, Providence may support us; wherefore should we not suffer injustice to obtain such assistance? It has been well said, that “when these reasons, often thought upon, shall have made any impression in us, it will be very hard for choler to surprise us; she will be tractable in her birth, if we be prepared against her assaults; for her violence proceeds rather from our weakness, than her own strength, and methinks we are fuller of remissness, than she of impetuosity.” Passionate persons should avoid luxurious living, and use moderate labour, or seek harmless pleasure. Anger should be turned to good use in behalf of justice, and be roused in the minds of some; that they may not be corrupted by promises or terrified by threats.

To separate passions from human nature would be like dividing the soul from the body. It has been remarked, that they are more easily ruled than the senses—that fear, anger, and love, are more capable of reason than is hunger, thirst, or sleep.

Since the passions must exist, and their *abuse* is likely to lead to melancholy, the regulation of them becomes of the utmost importance. When subject to reason they become ministers for good. Does not hope enable a man to

overcome the greatest difficulties? Did not boldness strengthen the mind of Miss Nightingale and the other faithful women who left their peaceful homes to risk the horrors of warfare in the Crimea, and there to witness the ghastly scenes in hospitals, in order to watch and tend the sick? and did not the same passion lead our soldiers to victory? Fortitude banishes fear, temperance restrains sensuality, and mercy sweetens anger. In fact virtue would have nothing to do without passions, and those who decry them have never known their value.

If, therefore, the bad use of passions frequently causes melancholy, the main object to be attained is the exciting of the will to a strong effort, in order to direct the motions of these sensitive appetites to a good use. A patient sometimes complains of his inability to call this power into exercise, which accords with the expression of St. Paul—“For the good that I would I do not, but the evil, which I would not, that I do.”

The mind should not be permitted to dwell too long upon one unpleasant thought—as disappointed ambition, troublesome law suits, and unrequited love, or any of the other plagues of life, nor to indulge in violent emotions. But as the Rev. Mr. Barlow justly says—“an effort would dismiss it, namely, the habitually recurring thought, for every one who has studied knows that he has had to dismiss many an intruding thought, with some effort too, if he wished to make progress in what he had undertaken.”

A medical practitioner placed a relative of his under my professional care last year, on account of severe melancholy and eccentricity, accompanied with two delusions, which preyed upon the mind. He held a government appointment, the duties of which he was obliged temporarily to relinquish in consequence of mental depression. He had been sent to the sea-side under medical care, and was taking

small doses of *nux vomica*—a powerful medicine—with other remedies, by the advice of an eminent physician, who devotes his whole attention to such maladies; but the symptoms became aggravated, and he was then placed under my care. Believing there was no structural disease, I abstained from the employment of medicine, although two of his friends thought I was losing time by discontinuing it; and trusted entirely to moral treatment. Being fond of music, he was taken to concerts, benevolent meetings, and into society. His mind was directed to a certain course of reading and to religious observances, so effectually, that in two months, when the delusions had vanished, he determined upon returning to his official duties. A further leave of absence from the office for another month was obtained, after which he resumed his usual occupation, which he has since fulfilled in a satisfactory manner. He also probably thought that, having lived about forty years single, he had been a bachelor long enough, for he recently married a lady, who, I am informed, is a very agreeable person. Retirement to a dull watering place at the dull season of the year did not suit this case. I believe that solitude does not agree with the generality of such patients, and am disposed to recommend the advice contained in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*,—"Do not mourn in solitude, or think too highly of what you have done, or be too much depressed by your bad fortune, but return as soon as possible to the day light of the world and of society."

I fear that only an imperfect sketch has been given of what might be done by individuals in exercising control over themselves, to prevent melancholy or insanity in certain instances; but as this mode of self-treatment is much neglected by many individuals who need it, and since we have seen there is still room for improvement in

the treatment of an unfortunate class of persons, I hope that your kind attention this evening will not have been thrown away. But should the lecture induce any person disposed to melancholy, so to apply reason in controlling excessive joy, sorrow, anger, hatred, fear, hope, desire, love, and despair, that he may regulate these passions for good rather than evil; or should it teach him to follow the advice of Seneca, that "he is most powerful who has himself in his power," my object will have been accomplished.

FINIS.

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